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ABSTRACT

Media statements and pronouncements by leaders in various sectors throughout the nation confirm that literacy still means the ability to work with the printed or written word. It is also evident that the term literacy includes more than reading. Literacy encompasses writing, speaking and listening, computing, and even problem-solving skills. Because the context of the United States is more complex and more technologically advanced than most other areas throughout the world, our popular notion of literacy includes a higher standard than that used anywhere else. Although it is true that the contexts in which Americans live vary widely, the evolving popular notion of literacy does include a set of shared contexts. In each of these, Americans are confronted with a series of tasks demanding a mastery of basic skills. Saying that literacy is a national priority is equivalent to saying that Americans must acquire the competence and knowledge to face the tasks confronting them in the contexts of their roles as family member or parent, producer or consumer, and citizen. The competencies required in today's uncertain world go beyond literacy or the basic skills and include discernment, reflection, risk taking, and being open to new perspectives. (MN)

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BEYOND LITERACY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

PAUL V. DELKER

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I MUST BEGIN BY CONGRATULATING THE CONFERENCE AND PROGRAM PLANNERS ON THEIR SELECTION OF BOTH THEME AND SITE. TO MEET IN THIS WORLD'S FAIR SITE IS ITSELF A STATEMENT ABOUT OUR TIMES, FOR IT CONFIRMS THAT WE ARE NOT ONLY MEMBERS OF FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND THIS GREAT COUNTRY, BUT WE ARE ALSO PLANETARY CITIZENS, CITIZENS OF THE WORLD. BEING A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD CONNOTES AN ENTIRELY NEW SET OF ADULT RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH ARE NOT WELL-UNDERSTOOD BY CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY, NOR OF ANY OTHER COUNTRY. NOR ARE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES WELL UNDERSTOOD BY A GREAT MANY LEADERS OF NATIONS TODAY. THIS PHENOMENON OF WORLD CITIZENRY IS TOO NEW FOR US TO UNDERSTAND AND WE CANNOT LOOK TO THE PAST FOR GUIDANCE. THAT FACT HIGHLIGHTS THE WISDOM OF THE LATTER HALF OF OUR CONFERENCE THEME: AN UNCERTAIN WORLD. WE ARE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD, AND WE ARE OURSELVES UNCERTAIN ABOUT HOW TO LIVE IN THAT WORLD, WHETHER INDEED WE WANT TO BE WORLD CITIZENS, AND WHETHER WORLD CITIZENSHIP IS A WORKABLE AND AN ACHIEVABLE REALITY. WE HAVE LEARNED TO SOME EXTENT TO SURVIVE AND HOW TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM VIOLENCE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND OUR COMMUNITIES, BUT WE WONDER IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE PROTECTED FROM TERRORIST WORLD-CITIZENS WHOSE ACTIONS SEEM TO REPUDIATE ANY NOTION OF WORLD COMMUNITY AND COMMUNAL EXISTENCE. THE MOST TEMPTING RESPONSE TO TERRORISM IS TO ISOLATE AND INSULATE ONE'S SELF FROM IT, YET THE REALITY OF OUR WORLD CITIZENSHIP CRASHES IN UPON AN ISOLATIONIST RESPONSE WITH THE QUESTION: "IS THAT REALLY POSSIBLE?" CLEARLY WE ARE WORLD CITIZENS IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD.

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BUT WHAT HAS THIS NEW EPOCH OF CITIZENRY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD TO DO WITH LITERACY? OR TO POSE THE QUESTION MORE APPROPRIATELY FOR THIS CONFERENCE, WHAT HAS LITERACY TO DO WITH BEING CITIZENS IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD? PUT ANOTHER WAY, IF WE ARE CONCERNED WITH CITIZENRY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD, WHY WOULD ONE CHOOSE TO FOCUS UPON LITERACY? WHY NOT UPON LEADERSHIP, OR EDUCATION GENERICALLY, OR PEACE, OR LAW OR GOVERNANCE? WHY LITERACY? AND THEN, AS THOUGH TO RAISE A SERIES OF EVEN MORE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, OUR PLANNERS PREFIX THE DIFFICULT AND INCREASINGLY AMBIGUOUS WORD "LITERACY" WITH "BEYOND..." WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "BEYOND LITERACY"? DOES IT MEAN WE MUST ASSUME A LEVEL OF LITERACY BY ALL IF WE ARE TO BE CITIZENS IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD? OR DOES IT MEAN WE SHOULD ASSUME LITERACY IS A GOOD THING BUT NOT EVERYONE HAS IT, AND WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THEM TO GET IT, BUT AN UNCERTAIN WORLD REQUIRES THAT WE DEAL WITH ISSUES NOW, AND THOSE OF US WHO ARE LITERATE HAVE TO GET ON WITH IT AND MAKE DECISIONS FOR OTHERS IN THIS UNCERTAIN WORLD?

WELL, I WANT TO BEGIN TO EXPLORE THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOU TODAY IN THE HOPE THAT THIS EXPLORATION WILL IN TIME LEAD US TO A NEW LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING AND A CLEARER COMMITMENT TO LITERACY, AND BEYOND, IN A WORLD, IF NOT MORE CERTAIN, AT LEAST, A WORLD BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND LESS HOSTILE TO WORLD CITIZENRY.

I WANT TO BEGIN THIS EXPLORATION BY TALKING ABOUT LITERACY. EVERYONE HERE KNOWS THE TERM HAS MANY MEANINGS. I AM NOT HERE TODAY TO ADVOCATE A SINGLE DEFINITION NOR TO PRESCRIBE A SET OF DEFINITIONS WHICH I WOULD LABEL LEGITIMATE. RATHER I WANT TO EXPLORE WITH YOU NOW -- AND I HOPE

THROUGHOUT THIS CONFERENCE AND BEYOND — THE MEANINGS OF LITERACY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CITIZENRY IN OUR UNCERTAIN WORLD.

TODAY LITERACY IS ON OUR NATIONAL AGENDA. IT IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY. THOSE OF US IN THIS ROOM ARE AMONG THOSE IN THIS COUNTRY BEST ABLE TO APPRECIATE WHAT AN ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT IS. IT HAS BEEN MY DISTINCT PRIVILEGE TO BE PART OF THE BASIC SKILLS AND LITERACY EFFORT AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL FOR TWENTY YEARS. IT HAS BEEN THE MOST REWARDING AND SATISFYING PERIOD OF MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

NEVERTHELESS, AS I HAVE OCCASIONALLY REMARKED BEFORE, UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO, NEXT TO THE MAYTAG REPAIRMAN, I WAS THE LONELIEST MAN IN TOWN. IT HAS TAKEN MORE THAN FIFTEEN YEARS FOR A PROBLEM WHICH WAS RECOGNIZED AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL AS REQUIRING ATTENTION TO BECOME A NATIONAL CONCERN. WHY HAS IT COME ABOUT? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS HISTORICALLY THAT HAVE BROUGHT THIS ABOUT. FOREMOST AMONG THESE ARE THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM AND ALL YOUR COLLEAGUES IN THE FIELD WHO WANTED TO BE HERE TODAY BUT COULDN'T BE. NO MOVEMENT SUCCEEDS WITHOUT A DEDICATED CONSTITUENCY COMMITTED TO PROFESSIONALISM AND TRUE EXCELLENCE. YOU COLLECTIVELY BUILT THE STRONGEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF ADULT EDUCATION THAT EXISTS ANYWHERE IN OUR UNCERTAIN WORLD. WITHOUT THAT SYSTEM, OUR STATE AND FEDERAL LAWMAKERS WOULD NOT HAVE THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE COULD EFFECTIVELY IMPROVE THE LITERACY OF OUR CITIZENS. WITHOUT YOUR EFFECTIVE WORK, THEY WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROBLEM IS REAL AND THAT WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE STRUCTURE TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM. YOU HAVE PROVIDED THE INFRASTRUCTURE UPON WHICH A NATIONAL EFFORT IN ADULT LITERACY CAN BE BASED.

YOU HAVE BEEN MOST NOTABLY ASSISTED IN SETTING THE NEW NATIONAL LITERACY AGENDA BY PRESIDENT REAGAN WHEN IN SEPTEMBER 1983 HE ANNOUNCED HIS ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE. LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO, PRESIDENT REAGAN SAID:

LET US TODAY RESOLVE TO ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES AND GET TO WORK, BECAUSE THERE'S VERY MUCH TO BE DONE. ACROSS THIS GREAT LAND, LET THOSE OF US WHO CAN READ TEACH THOSE WHO CANNOT. LET THE LIGHTS BURN LATE IN OUR CLASSROOMS, OUR CHURCH BASEMENTS, OUR LIBRARIES AND AROUND OUR KITCHEN TABLES, WHEREVER WE CAN GATHER TO HELP OTHERS HELP THEMSELVES TO THE AMERICAN DREAM.

IN OUR DEMOCRACY, NO ISSUE REMAINS ON OUR NATIONAL AGENDA UNLESS MOST OF OUR CITIZENS HAVE SOME UNDERSTANDING OF AND GIVE SUPPORT TO THAT CAUSE. MRS. BARBARA BUSH, THE WIFE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, HAS TIRELESSLY CARRIED THE MESSAGE OF NEED AND NATIONAL URGENCY TO ALL PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY. MORE THAN ANY OTHER PERSON, SHE HAS ASSISTED YOU IN RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR ADULT LITERACY. WE ALL OWE MRS. BUSH OUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GRATITUDE FOR SO ABLY AND EFFECTIVELY ASSISTING HER FELLOW CITIZENS IN THE QUEST FOR LITERACY.

THE MAJOR FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR ADULT LITERACY, THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT, HAS ALWAYS ENJOYED BI-PARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT. AT THIS VERY TIME, THE HOUSE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF CONGRESSMAN HAWKINS AND THE SENATE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF SENATOR STAFFORD ARE CONDUCTING JOINT HEARINGS ON ADULT LITERACY. ON MAY 22, CONGRESSMAN HAWKINS AND CONGRESSMAN GOODLING INTRODUCED A JOINT RESOLUTION TO MAKE SEPTEMBER ADULT LITERACY AWARENESS MONTH. THESE CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS BOTH MIRROR AND MAGNIFY THE DRAMATIC INCREASE IN OUR NATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING ADULT LITERACY.

A RECENT STUDY RELEASED BY THE OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT, A RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS ARM OF THE U.S. CONGRESS, ENTITLED: TECHNOLOGY AND STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT: REEMPLOYING DISPLACED ADULTS, MERITS YOUR CAREFUL ATTENTION. ALTHOUGH FOCUSED SPECIFICALLY ON THE PROBLEM OF WORKER OBSOLESCENCE AND DISPLACEMENT, THIS STUDY STATES:

...EVEN THOUGH THE EXACT NUMBER OF ADULTS IN NEED OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION IS UNKNOWN, THE NUMBER IS CLEARLY LARGE; A SERIOUS BASIC SKILLS PROBLEM DOES EXIST IN THIS COUNTRY. OVER THE LONG TERM, IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS MAY EASE THE PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE NEED FOR REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN THE ADULT POPULATION WILL REMAIN A CRUCIAL EDUCATIONAL PRIORITY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. (P. 86)

IN ADDITION TO RECOGNIZING THE TRUE SCOPE OF THE BASIC SKILLS PROBLEM, THIS REPORT, IN THE OPTIONS WHICH IT PRESENTS TO THE CONGRESS, RECOGNIZES THE CENTRALITY OF THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT IN ADDRESSING THE BASIC SKILLS PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY. IT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT "CONGRESS MIGHT WISH TO CREATE A SPECIAL STUDY COMMISSION (OR CALL ON THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO DO SO) TO DEVELOP AN OVERALL LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING THE BASIC SKILLS PROBLEM" P.87.

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SEPTEMBER 1983 ANNOUNCEMENT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED THE ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE. SECRETARY TERRELL BELL ESTABLISHED A SPECIAL ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE OFFICE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DIANE VINES TO STIMULATE DEPARTMENT-WIDE, PRIVATE-SECTOR AND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FOR LITERACY. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF SECRETARY BENNETT AND THE ABLE DIRECTION OF MY COLLEAGUE KARL HAIGLER, THE INITIATIVE CONTINUES TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY FOR ALL. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF HAROLD MCGRAW, THE BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR EFFECTIVE LITERACY HAS VERY EFFEC-

TIVELY BROUGHT THE INCREASING ATTENTION AND RESOURCES OF THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SECTORS TO THE ISSUE OF BASIC SKILLS AND LITERACY. ON SEPTEMBER 3 OF THIS YEAR, ABC AND PBS WILL LAUNCH A YEAR-LONG PRIME TIME EFFORT ENTITLED PROJECT LITERACY U.S. — PLUS. THIS PROJECT IS NOW GENERATING TASK FORCES IN EVERY ABC AND PBS VIEWING AREA. THESE TASK FORCES ARE IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN ADVANCE OF THE TELEVISION PROGRAMS TO ASSURE THAT THOSE WHO OFFER TO HELP AND THOSE WHO SEEK HELP CAN IMMEDIATELY BECOME PART OF THE LITERACY INITIATIVE.

THESE DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENTS, TOGETHER WITH THE MYRIAD ARTICLES AND PUBLICATIONS APPEARING WEEKLY, ATTEST TO THE FACT OF LITERACY AS A NEW NATIONAL PRIORITY. THOMAS JEFFERSON MUST BE SMILING ANEW AS HE SEES HIS COUNTRY AFFIRM ONCE AGAIN THAT THE KEY TO A STRONG DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IS BASIC SKILLS AND EDUCATION FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS.

HAVING CONFIRMED THAT ADULT LITERACY IS NOW TRULY A NATIONAL PRIORITY, THE IMPORTANT QUESTION MUST BE ASKED: WHAT DOES THE NATION WANT WHEN IT SAYS ALL ITS CITIZENS SHOULD BE LITERATE? WHAT DO WE PERCEIVE LITERACY TO BE AND WHAT DO WE PERCEIVE IT WILL DO FOR INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS?

THOSE OF US WHOSE PROFESSIONS ARE ADULT EDUCATION AND ADULT LITERACY HAVE EVOLVED RATHER CLEAR AND SOMETIMES SOPHISTICATED NOTIONS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LITERATE ADULT. HOWEVER, WHEN LITERACY BECOMES A NATIONAL PRIORITY, IT IS NOT NECESSARILY OUR NOTIONS THAT MAY PREVAIL. THUS, WE NEED TO LOOK OUTSIDE OUR OWN RANKS FOR CLUES THAT TELL US WHAT WE AS A NATION MEAN WHEN WE MAKE LITERACY A PRIORITY.

IF WE LOOK AT THE MEDIA STATEMENTS OF ALL TYPES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS BY LEADERS IN VARIOUS SECTORS, THE MOST EVIDENT CLUES ARE THAT LITERACY STILL MEANS ABILITY TO WORK WITH THE PRINTED OR WRITTEN WORD. THAT IS ITS ROOT MEANING AND THAT IS CLEARLY AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR NATIONAL CONSENSUS ABOUT LITERACY. IT IS ALSO EVIDENT THAT WE MEAN MORE THAN READING AND THAT WE INCLUDE IN THE TERM WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING, AND COMPUTING. IMPLICITLY OR EXPLICITLY THERE IS CONSENSUS THAT PROBLEM-SOLVING IS ALSO A QUALITY TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR NOTION OF LITERACY. RARELY DOES AN ARTICLE OR STATEMENT ON LITERACY NOT REFER TO AN ILLITERATE'S INABILITY TO CARRY OUT SPECIFIC TASKS COMMON TO HER ON HIS ROLE AS CONSUMER, PARENT, WORKER, COMMUNITY-MEMBER OR CITIZEN. OUR POPULAR NOTION OF LITERACY IS THAT LITERACY OCCURS IN A TIME AND A PLACE, A CONTEXT, AND THAT CONTEXT IS THE UNITED STATES IN 1986 AND BEYOND. THUS, IT IS TRUE TO SAY THAT OUR POPULAR NOTION OF LITERACY INCLUDES A HIGHER STANDARD THAN THAT USED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD BECAUSE OUR CONTEXT IS MORE COMPLEX AND MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED.

IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT THE CONTEXTS OF MANY AMERICANS VARY A GREAT DEAL. WE DO NOT ALL LIVE IN IDENTICAL CONTEXTS. BUT THE EVOLVING POPULAR NOTION OF LITERACY DOES INCLUDE A SET OF SHARED CONTEXTS. TO SAY THEY ARE SHARED IS NOT TO SAY EVERYONE RESIDES IN ALL OF THESE CONTEXTS. IT RATHER SAYS THAT OUR GENERAL CONTEXT HAS COMMONALITIES THAT SOONER OR LATER TOUCH ALL OUR LIVES AS FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AS MEMBERS OF THE WORK-PLACE, AS CONSUMERS, OR AS CITIZENS. IN EACH OF THESE SHARED CONTEXTS WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH A SERIES OF TASKS, AND IN PERFORMING MANY OF THESE TASKS WE MUST HAVE MASTERY OF BASIC SKILLS, BUT BASIC SKILLS ARE NOT ENOUGH. EACH CONTEXT DEMANDS A NEW LITERACY, THAT IS TO SAY, THE ADULT

MUST HAVE THE COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE TO DEAL WITH DIFFERENT SETS OF TASKS WITH WHICH HE OR SHE IS CONFRONTED IN THESE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS.

THUS, WHEN WE SAY LITERACY IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY AND WE AS A NATION GIVE THESE MEANINGS TO THE TERM, WE ARE SAYING THAT IT REALLY IS NOT FEASIBLE THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF OUR CITIZENS CAN LIVE FULFILLING AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO PERFORM A VARIETY OF TASKS THAT ARISE IN A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS. THEY MUST ACQUIRE NEW LITERACIES BECAUSE ALL OUR WORLDS HAVE BECOME UNCERTAIN WORLDS — THE WORLDS OF FAMILY MEMBER OR PARENT, THE WORLDS OF ECONOMIC PRODUCER AND CONSUMER, AND THE WORLD OF CITIZEN. EACH OF THESE WORLDS IS IN SOME SENSE SHARED AND EACH IS UNCERTAIN. THE TASKS WITH WHICH WE ARE CONFRONTED TODAY ARE NOT JUST THOSE OF FORMER TIMES, NOR ARE THOSE OF THE FUTURE GOING TO CONSIST ONLY OF THOSE WITH WHICH WE ARE CONFRONTED TODAY. EACH WORLD REQUIRES A LITERACY; EACH LITERACY CONSISTS OF BASIC SKILLS BLENDED WITH KNOWLEDGES THAT ARE MANIFESTED IN NEW COMPETENCIES.

AT THIS POINT I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE THE MEANING WHICH I GIVE TO THE PHRASE "BEYOND LITERACY ..." AS USED IN THIS CONFERENCE. I BELIEVE THAT BY THIS WE MEAN THAT BASIC SKILLS. ARE PART OF LITERACY BUT THAT LITERACY AS REQUIRED IN OUR UNCERTAIN WORLDS OF TODAY GOES BEYOND BASIC SKILLS IT GOES BEYOND BASIC SKILLS TO HIGHER ORDER COMPETENCIES, COMPETENCIES SUCH AS IMAGING ALTERNATIVES, DISCERNING THAT THIS WILL IMPROVE MY CONTROL OVER CIRCUMSTANCES AND THAT WILL NOT, REALIZING THAT QUALITIES AND FEELINGS IN MYSELF ARE NOT ALWAYS THOSE OF OTHERS NOR THAT THEY SHOULD BE, DISCERNING THAT THIS IS GOOD, OR IF YOU PREFER, RIGHT, AND THAT IS NOT. I SUGGEST THESE — AND THEY ARE INTENDED ONLY AS SUGGESTIONS — BECAUSE

THESE ARE THE KINDS OF COMPETENCIES THAT ARE REQUIRED TO LIVE EFFECTIVELY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD. BASIC SKILLS ARE BEDROCK, BUT AS SKILLS THEY ARE DIRECTED PRINCIPALLY TO THE PREDICTABLE. THE COMPETENCIES TO LIVE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD REQUIRE DISCERNMENT, REFLECTION, RISK-TAKING, BEING OPEN TO NEW PERSPECTIVES, AND OTHERS WHICH CLEARLY GO BEYOND THE LITERACY OF BASIC SKILLS.

IT IS COMMONPLACE TO SAY WE LIVE IN AN INFORMATION-RICH SOCIETY. AND IT IS TRUE. THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO A TOTAL ILLITERATE IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY IS GREATER THAN THAT AVAILABLE TO A FULLY LITERATE PERSON OF COLONIAL AMERICA. TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA ARE LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STRIKING DIFFERENCE IN THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO EVEN THE MOST DISADVANTAGED AMONG US. SOME SOCIAL COMMENTATORS CONCLUDE FROM THIS THAT LITERACY, OR BASIC SKILLS, WILL IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BE ARCHAIC REQUIREMENTS. I COME TO THE OPPOSITE CONCLUSION, NOT BECAUSE INFORMATION MAY NOT BE PROCESSED BETTER FOR US BY TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA THAN BY HUMAN INTELLIGENCE, BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT I PERCEIVE TO BE THE ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BASIC SKILLS AND THESE HIGHER COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD. LET ME ILLUSTRATE.

OUR INFORMATION AFFLUENCE IS LARGELY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MEDIA. INFORMATION PRESENTED TO US IN THIS WAY CAN BE RICH IN QUANTITY, QUALITY, AND SYNTHESIS. BUT WHAT IT DOES NOT DO, WHAT IT DOES NOT REQUIRE, IS THAT WE EXERCISE REFLECTION AND DISCERNMENT. BUT REFLECTION AND DISCERNMENT ARE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF BASIC SKILLS. READING, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING INVARIABLY INVOLVE REFLECTION AND DISCERNMENT. THUS I COME TO THE PERHAPS RADICAL POSITION THAT BASIC SKILLS ARE MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO

AN UNCERTAIN WORLD THAN IS INFORMATION AFFLUENCE! IT ALSO FOLLOWS THAT AS INFORMATION RICHNESS INCREASES, THE NEED FOR BASIC SKILLS INCREASES BECAUSE THESE SKILLS ARE BASIC TO THE HUMAN QUALITIES REQUIRED TO EXERCISE REFLECTION AND DISCERNMENT ABOUT INFORMATION. "BEYOND LITERACY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD" SUCCINCTLY AND WISELY STATES THE CHALLENGE CONFRONTING US AS ADULT EDUCATORS. THE LITERACY REQUIRED IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD IS RELATED TO BASIC SKILLS BUT GOES BEYOND BASIC SKILLS. LET US CALL THIS, THE NEW LITERACY. WHAT ARE THE COMPETENCIES THAT MAKE UP THE NEW LITERACY AND HOW DOES ONE LEARN THEM? HOW DO WE AS ADULT EDUCATORS INTENTIONALLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY INCREASE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEW LITERACY AND OUR ABILITY TO ASSIST OTHERS IN LEARNING THE NEW LITERACY? THESE ARE, I HOPE, THE QUESTIONS THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THIS CONFERENCE AND LONG AFTER . . . THIS CONFERENCE, FOR THEY ARE, IN MY VIEW, THE QUESTIONS WHICH THIS LEADERSHIP MUST ADDRESS. HAVING LITERACY AS OUR NATIONAL CONCERN PRESENTS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO THOSE OF US IN ADULT EDUCATION AND PLACES UPON US A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY TO PIONEER THE NEW LITERACY.

THERE IS ONE MORE DIMENSION TO THE NEW LITERACY WHICH I MUST ADDRESS BEFORE CONCLUDING. TO THIS POINT, THE UNCERTAIN WORLD WHICH I HAVE ADDRESSED HAS BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY THE WORLD OF THE UNITED STATES. THAT IS OUR COMMON CONTEXT. BUT THERE IS A LARGER CONTEXT THAT IS ALSO COMMON, AND THIS IS THE CONTEXT THE CONFERENCE THEME ADDRESSES IN "BEYOND LITERACY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD." I AM OF COURSE REFERRING TO OUR ROLE AS CITIZENS OF THE WORLD. THIS ROLE IS OUR NEWEST, OUR LEAST KNOWN AND LEAST UNDERSTOOD, AND CALLS FOR A NEW LITERACY WHICH I WILL REFER TO AS THE LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP. EARLY IN MY REMARKS, I SPOKE TO THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM. THIS IS ONLY ONE DIMENSION OF THE UNCERTAIN WORLD

IN WHICH WE ARE ALL NOW CALLED TO BE CITIZENS. THE CONTEXT OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP IS EMINENTLY MORE COMPLEX AND UNCERTAIN THAN OUR CONTEXT AS MEMBERS OF OUR COMMON CULTURE. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE THE WORLD USE OF PLUTONIUM. IT IS NOW WIDELY HELD THAT BY THE YEAR 2000 TWENTY COUNTRIES WILL HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN TERRORISM AND EASY ACCESS TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONVERGE. THE CIVIC LIFE OF OUR PLANET IS RAPIDLY BECOMING AS INTERACTIVE AS THAT OF OUR OWN COUNTRY. THE SURVIVAL OF THE HUMAN RACE DEPENDS UPON OUR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY AND TO ACQUIRE THE NEW LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP. WHAT IS THE BASIC EDUCATION THAT HUMAN BEINGS NEED TODAY? RECENTLY A REMOTE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ACCIDENT IN RUSSIA THREATENED MUCH OF EUROPE AND HELD CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR OWN ECOLOGY. AND OUR NATIONAL AND GLOBAL TOXIC WASTE PROBLEMS REQUIRES BOTH A NATIONAL AND PLANETARY CONSENSUS IF THE SOLUTION IS TO SAFEGUARD ALL AND JEOPARDIZE NONE.

I WOULD DO YOU A DISSERVICE IF IN ADDRESSING THE LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP I ESPOUSED THAT THE UNCERTAINTIES WERE PRIMARILY NEGATIVE AND LIFE-THREATENING. THERE ARE MANY MORE UNCERTANITIES THAT ARE POSITIVE AND LIFE-SUPPORTING. THESE ARE THE UNCERTAINTIES OF OPPORTUNITY. THE OPPORTUNITY TO PREDICT AND TO AVOID THE CONSEQUENCES OF EARTHQUAKES, VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS AND FAMINES. THE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AS THEY APPLY TO THE HEALTH OF THE WORLD AND TO THE STEWARD-SHIP OF THE RESOURCES OF PLANET EARTH. THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE FULLY DISCOVER AND SHARE THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN LEARNING AND THEIR APPLICATION. IN A FEW WORDS, THE NEW LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO GENERATE A NEW ORDER OF DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PLANETARY CITIZENS.

BECAUSE OF THE NEWNESS, THE ENORMITY, AND THE COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES INVOLVED IN PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP, THERE IS A TENDENCY TO DEFER THESE DECISIONS TO LEADERS AND TO AN EDUCATED ELITE. BUT THE EDUCATED AND THE ELECTED AND APPOINTED HAVE NO MORE EXPERIENCE WITH PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP THAN THE REST OF HUMANITY. FURTHERMORE, THE DISGRUNTLED AND HOSTILE INDIVIDUAL WHO FEELS DISENFRANCHISED OF HIS PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP IS AS LIKELY AS ANYONE TO RESORT TO GLOBAL DESTRUCTION. WHAT ARISTOTLE POINTED OUT IN HIS ETHICS IS EVERMORE TRUE AMONG WORLD CITIZENS THAN IT WAS IN GREEK SOCIETY, NAMELY THAT THOSE BASIC ISSUES OF SURVIVAL AND ORDER ARE LEFT MORE TO COLLECTIVE HUMANITY THAN TO THE ELITE. SO, AS YOU CAN SEE, I REJECT THE OPTION I LAID OUT IN THE BEGINNING OF MY REMARKS TO DEFER THE ISSUES AND DECISIONS AFFECTING PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP TO AN EDUCATED AND POWERFUL ELITE.

THE ISSUE OF WHO SHOULD BECOME LITERATE AS PLANETARY CITIZENS MUST NOT BE DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF CLASS IF DEMOCRACY IS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS STRONG ENOUGH TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF AN UNCERTAIN WORLD. AND THIS CHALLENGE FALLS HEAVIEST UPON THOSE OF US IN THIS ROOM AND UPON OUR ADULT EDUCATION COLLEAGUES, FOR IT REQUIRES THAT WE IMMEDIATELY EXPAND THE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM TO PREPARE THE POOR AND THE LESS EDUCATED TO BEGIN TO ACQUIRE THE LITERACY OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP. ELEVEN YEARS AFTER THE ADULT PERFORMANCE LEVEL PROJECT PROVIDED US A FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING WHAT I WILL CALL HERE THE "DOMESTIC LITERACIES," THE CURRICULUM AND THE COMPETENCIES TO HELP ADULTS ACQUIRE THESE LITERACIES ARE REASONABLY WELL IDENTIFIED AND DEVELOPED. BUT ELEVEN YEARS AGO, WE DID NOT ENCOUNTER THE REQUIREMENTS OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP AND WE HAVE NOT ADDRESSED THESE

DURING THE PAST ELEVEN YEARS. WE MUST NOW BEGIN TO DO SO. IT IS ALREADY MUCH TOO LATE TO BE EARLY. NOT ONLY MUST WE IDENTIFY THESE COMPETENCIES THAT WILL MAKE UP THE LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP, WE MUST DEVELOP NEW LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR ACQUIRING THEM. WHAT LITTLE WE DO KNOW ABOUT THE LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP SUGGESTS TO ME THAT MUCH WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE. A FEW OF OUR NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN THE EARLY 1970'S DIRECTLY SOUGHT TO FIND NEW LEARNING PARADIGMS TO ASSIST UNDER-EDUCATED ADULTS TO ACQUIRE SOME OF THE TYPES OF COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN THE LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP. I HAVE IN MIND SPECIFICALLY THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY CIVIC LITERACY PROJECT AND THE WORLD EDUCATION AIM PROJECT. THESE WERE SIGNIFICANT ALTHOUGH RUDIMENTARY BEGINNINGS AND I HAVE NOT SEEN AMONG THE NOW THOUSANDS OF STATE DEVELOPMENTAL 310 PROJECTS EFFORTS TO CARRY THIS WORK FORWARD. PERHAPS THEY ARE THERE. I HOPE THEY ARE AND I HAVE ONLY OVERLOOKED THEM. WHATEVER THE STATUS OF DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS IN THIS AREA, I CONSIDER IT THE MOST URGENT AREA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH THEORY AND PRACTICE.

BEFORE CONCLUDING, LET ME SAY WHAT I THINK WE KNOW ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE POOR AND UNDEREDUCATED ADULT TO RESPOND TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP. THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL ARGUE THAT THESE REQUIREMENTS PRE-SUPPOSE A LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND SOPHISTICATION FAR BEYOND WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ADULT BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION. BUT THE PROJECTS TO WHICH I REFERRED AND THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF ADULT EDUCATORS UPON WHICH I AM ABLE TO DRAW REFUTES THAT POSITION. IT RATHER SAYS — AND ARISTOTLE SHARED THIS VIEW IN HIS ETHICS — THAT THERE IS A RESIDUE OF COMMON SENSE AMONG THE POOR AND THE WORKING PEOPLE THAT EQUIPS THEM TO RESPOND TO THIS CHALLENGE. THEY FREQUENTLY EXHIBIT A MUCH

THINNER ARMOR OF FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS THAN THOSE OF US WHO ARE BETTER EDUCATED BY CURRENT STANDARDS. THIS SAYS THAT ONE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE FROM THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC MIDDLE OR UPPER CLASS TO ACQUIRE THE NEW LITERACY OF PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP. IT MAY EVEN SAY THAT THOSE WHOM WE SEEK TO SERVE ARE CAPABLE OF LEARNING THIS NEW LITERACY BEFORE THOSE OF US WHO SERVE THEM.

FOR ALL OF US IN ADULT EDUCATION, THIS IS A WATERSHED PERIOD. THE GOAL WE SOUGHT AND NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE IS BEING ACHIEVED. ADULT LITERACY IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY. I COMMEND ALL OF YOU, CONGRATULATE YOU, AND THANK YOU.

BEYOND LITERACY? MOST ASSUREDLY! IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD? UNAVOIDABLY! YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED YOUR OWN NEW CHALLENGE. YOU ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN FACE IT AND I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITY TO MEET IT.